

And So It Goes

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##@##" In every heart there is a room

A sanctuary safe and strong

To heal the wounds from lovers past

Until a new one comes along"##@##

A hotel in Paris, summer of 1979

Helena Cassadine looked over the city of lights from her penthouse room in the Hotel De Crillon. She could see the Eiffel Tower from one window, and the Arc de Triumph from the other. And of course the wretched tourists milling everywhere. This was not where she wanted to be. There were times when the fury grew exponentially with in her she couldn't control herself. It certainly seemed like it would be one of those days.

And Mikkos chose this time to leave her and their children. And of course that little nuisance Alexis. Her husband had reassured her that it would be best if she would stay here, while he worked on the Ice Princess. She smiled at him at the time, and let her blood boil beneath the surface.

She was stuck in this city with bothersome children, and no prospects of relief or fun. Whereas Mikkos was free to have affairs, father more illegitimate children. If she dared to be so bold in her affairs she would certainly be killed.

And her children were of no comfort to her. Stavros, although her favorite, was more and more like his father every day, arrogant and headstrong. Stefan was the exact opposite, weak-willed and kind. Stefan had always been like that, but now his compassion was ten-fold, and it was that prostitute's entire fault. How dare he wish to marry some wench from the United States. Ever since he came back from that long trip, he has not been the same.

And of course Alexis, she wished that she could slit the child's throat as she did her mother's. She was a bothersome nuisance, and had dared to associate herself with her boys. And Stavros and Stefan seemed to enjoy her presence; they treated her like a princess when Helena was not around.

Helena desperately wanted attention. She craved it. And she wanted to stop her husband from having his own fun, since she could not have her own. He was with Victor and Alexandria Quartermaine, painting precious diamonds black and plotting world conquest. And Helena was stuck as a tourist in Paris with three children.

She drew her bath with malicious thoughts in her mind. She would certainly foil her husband's plans. She sipped on the champagne and adjusted her intricate nightgown. Mikkos would have no choice but to come to her now. She stepped into the bath, fully clothed, with the glass of champagne in her hands.

With only a moment's hesitation she held the hand carved handle of the knife over her wrist. She held her breath as she slowly made a superficial cut, deep enough to bleed, but not deep enough to hurt her. And then she waited for one of her sons to find her.

Meanwhile, the door to the large suite opened, and a maid stepped in cautiously.

"Madame Cassadine?" the maid called out. It was one in the afternoon; most of the tourists were out seeing the sights of Paris. Yet she was still cautious of cleaning this particular room. The Cassadines were known to be horribly fussy, and they may very well be angry if a maid dared to clean their rooms in their presence.

And Monique Thernadas could not afford to anger the guests. This was her second day of working at the hotel, and she desperately needed the money. She stepped into the room and placed her cleaning supplies on a nearby table to put her keys away. She pushed back a lock of jet-black hair from her pretty face and looked around. They may be rich and powerful, but they certainly were slobs.

Monique had heard every rumor about the Cassadine family. And every rumor made her hate them even more. They were pompous, arrogant, relics from an aristocratic period. And they thrived on making life miserable for common people. The two young men seemed entirely different. One was fair and seemed quite kind, albeit very thin-skinned. He was quiet and melancholy, walking about all day staring into the sun. He was rumored to be quite insane from love-sickness.

And the other seemed like the devil himself, with rakish black hair and flaming dark eyes. He had a horrible reputation for bringing women of ill repute back to the five star hotel. And he

had been known to throw plates of food at servers if it was too hot or cold. She wondered how he had gotten so far in life being such a heel, and she figured it must be all that money.

Monique made her way to the bathroom, thinking of finishing the hard work first. Helena heard the movement outside and figured it was one of her sons. She closed her eyes tightly and laid her wrist over the bathtub, the blood dripping for effect.

"Madame!" Monique shouted as soon as she saw the woman lying in the bathtub, apparently unconscious. She saw the blood and instinct took over. She rushed over and applied pressure to the wound, hoping to stop the bleeding.

"What on earth are you doing!" Helena shouted, yanking her wrist away.

"Madame, you're hurt let me get a doctor for you," Monique insisted in a beautifully accented English.

"I am perfectly fine!" Helena hissed angrily, looking at this girl with daggers of hate. "You have ruined everything."

"Madame Cassadine, you were bleeding," Monique mumbled, dumb struck at this created death scene.

"I was in control you impudent hussy!" Helena snapped. "I will have your head for this."

Monique drew back as if scalded. She knew all the rumors were true about this crazy woman. Her job was ruined now, for trying to save this evil woman's life. Her mouth turned into a vicious smile as she got up from the side of the bath.

"Madame this is the 20th century," Monique snapped angrily. "And you are certainly not Marie Antoinette to be demanding heads!"

"Get out of my room, I will have you fired immediately," Helena growled; only angered more by the backbone this girl seemed to possess. "You have ruined everything!"

"I most certainly have ruined the peace this world would experience if you had died," Monique shot back, knowing that she had already lost her job.

Meanwhile Stavros Cassadine walked into the vast hotel suite and heard the sounds of angry women yelling back and forth at each other. This should be more interesting than trying to seduce tourists. He was really bored out of his mind in Paris, and hearing his mother argue should offer him a laugh for the afternoon.

He was surprised to hear a lovely voice calmly telling his mother what an evil person she was. He was rather impressed with her vocabulary, and he knew there must be a pretty face to accompany that voice. He rather liked hearing his mother being torn down like that, and it was rare that someone had the nerve to do so.

He laughed a bit when Monique started muttering obscenities in French at Helena though. Helena heard him and called out,

> "Stavros, is that you?" <p>

"Mother, I just came back, what is going on?" Stavros opened the bathroom, looking about with a perfectly innocent expression.

"Take this girl away from me," Helena pouted. "Have her firedâ€or killed, or both."

"Your insane mother tried to commit suicide!" Monique shouted, boggled at what was going on. "Then she has the audacity to yell at me when I try to save her."

"You liar!" Helena shouted. "You interrupted my bath, and now you're creating lies to keep your job."

"Mother, I will talk to the manager and make sure this girl loses her job," Stavros reassures. He takes Monique's arm and begins to lead her out of the bathroom.

"You Cassadines are as insane as everyone says," Monique laughed bitterly, pulling her arm from Stavros' touch. She looked at him with sparks of hate in her light brown eyes and said in a low whisper, "Do not touch me."

"Let her go Stavros," Helena called, finding that this situation may still be salvageable. "Come and help me."

Stavros obliged, helping his mother out of the water. He didn't ask questions about the superficial wound on her arm, the half-empty bottle of champagne, or the fully clothed bath. He knew that his mother often went on half-sane ridiculous tangents, often having the plan foiled. It was her way of getting attention. He had no real problem with it, and found that if he pitied her he got a larger allowance.

"That idiotic girl had no idea what she was talking about Stavros," Helena sighed. "You should tell your father what happens when he is not around."

"I will mother," Stavros nodded. He looked around, and couldn't help but feel the desire to go and catch that girl.

She was even more beautiful than he had imagined. When he saw her standing defiantly in the bathroom over Helena, he knew he had found his new Paris conquest. Her black hair had fell down her back in a smooth sheet and her face was that of a goddess.

Stavros looked at his mother with a fake smile and said, "I shall go and speak to the manager now, and have her fired."

"Thank you Stavros," Helena smiled. "I know I can always count on my favorite son."

Stavros grimaced as he walked out of the suite. He shut the door and nearly sprinted to the elevator, desperate to find that maid. The elevator finally made it to the bottom floor and Stavros ran up to the main desk.

"Excuse me?" Stavros rang the bell repeatedly; something the staff

had grown accustomed to expect from the spoiled brat. The concierge came to the desk with a forced smile.

"Can I help you Monsieur Cassadine?"

"There was a girl that was just cleaning my suite. Beautiful girl with black hair," Stavros explained breathlessly. "I need to find her, Iâ€¦forgot to, give her a tip."

"She just quit Monsieur," the concierge smiled.

"Do you have name, or an address you could give me?" Stavros asked, frowning. The girl had managed to quit before his mother could get her fired. That was quite impressive.

"We don't usually give that information out," the concierge explained. "It is personal information."

Stavros nodded, placing his hands on his hips. His lips twisted into a persuasive smile as he reached into his pocket.

"I'm sure we can work something out," Stavros said quietly, laying a few large bills on the countertop.

A street in Paris

#@#@#"I spoke to you in cautious tones

You answered me with no pretense

And still I feel I said too much

My silence is my self-defense"#@#@#

Stavros walked down the crowded street with a scowl, purposely pushing into tourists as he passed. He was angry at the world, and most of all that elusive girl, Monique Thernadas. The only thing he had was a name, a fake address, and a bunch of government officials that couldn't be bribed.

He had been searching for four days, which in his pompous mind was long enough to discover the fountain of eternal youth. This was only a girl, and he could have any girl that he walked up to on the street. He was immediately drawn to her and the idea of herâ€¦and he couldn't get her out of his head.

He stopped at a sidewalk cafÃ© and sat down in annoyance. He looked around for immediate service, and finding none, he clapped his hands together like an emperor summoning his harem.

"I am a paying customer!" Stavros shouted in crude French.

"One moment Monsieur," a familiar voice answered. She approached the table, looking down at her pad and said in hurried French, "You will have to have patience with me. I am new."

Monique looked up from her order pad to greet her customer properly. She was shocked to see the arrogantly grinning man sitting in front of her.

"You!" Monique growled.

"I've been looking for you," Stavros smiled.

"What, you could not take my other job out from under me, so you have the need to take this job from me?" Monique asked angrily.

"I never wanted you to lose your job," Stavros smiled innocently.
"You quit your job rather hastily."

"I had no choice," Monique spat out. "It was either quite with dignity or be fired by your insane mother."

"You should lower your voice," Stavros whispered, looking at the stares they were eliciting. "Unless you don't want to keep this job either."

"I wasn't aware I had a choice in the matter!" Monique laughed. She looked around however and saw that her new boss was looking at the commotion she was making. She whispered, "Please leave."

"I am a paying customer," Stavros grinned. "I would appreciate seeing a menu."

"Are you hell-bent on ruining my life? Is that how Cassadine games work? I save your evil mother's life in exchange for my own? Is that the case Monsieur Cassadine? Because I will gladly go back to the hotel and kill that witch to reclaim what is left of my life!"

"Monique!" a loud voice interrupted her ranting.

Monique cursed her existence and turned around with a hesitant look. Her very short, bald manager was looking back up at the tall girl, his arms crossed angrily.

"Do you like harassing the customers young lady?" the boss asked with a sneer. "We do not work like that."

"I can explainâ€¦" Monique tried to interrupt.

"I don't want to hear it!" the boss said angrily. "We no longer require your services!"

Monique bit her lip, trying to control the temper burning within. She looked down at the pompous little man whose orders she no longer had to follow. The sneer was wiped off his face as Monique towered over him at 5'7" with a look that could freeze a cactus in the desert.

"I don't need your stupid little job! And I don't need to take orders from a stupid little man like you!" Monique yelled, not being able to control her red-hot temper. She turned to the customers that were now openly watching the performance. "This is a horrible restaurantâ€¦you would not want to know what kind of meat they put in the soup, and there are rats in the storage room!"

With that Monique threw down her apron, and pushed past a laughing Stavros.

"I am sorry about that outburst," the boss looked around, then

turning to a very amused Stavros. "And I am most sorry about the service you received Monsieur."

"I loved the service," Stavros reassured him, rolling his eyes at the silly little man. He turned to go after a triumphant Monique, finding it difficult to catch up with her. "Monique! Monique Thernadas!"

Monique turned around, her cheeks flushing red. Stavros caught up to her and smiled breathlessly.

"How do you know my name?" Monique demanded.

"You would be surprised what money can do," Stavros shrugged.

"I wouldn't know. I've lost two jobs in the last five days thanks to you," Monique snapped. "I have no money to buy people off."

"I'm sorry for that scene," Stavros apologized, finding it strange that he was stooping to apologize to this common girl. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his thick wallet, "Allow me to recompense you for your troubles."

"There is no need," Monique said shortly. "Leaving me alone would be all the payment I require."

"I can't just leave you alone!" Stavros laughed.

"It's quite easy, I walk away and you never talk to me again," Monique said flippantly. "Here, lets try right now. Goodbye Monsieur Cassadine, have a horrible life."

"Monique!" Stavros laughed, grabbing her arm. Seeing that he had her attention he turned on his devilish charm, "I went through a lot of trouble to find you."

"I suppose I should be swooning at your feet for that," Monique laughed.

"Yes!" Stavros said seriously. "But it intrigues me even more that you are not."

Monique was speechless. She looked down at her arm, which Stavros still had clutched in his hand. This man was too much.

"My name is Stavros," he said softly, pulling her closer to him.

Monique was in a half daze; this man obviously had not been used to getting a negative answer.

"Should I cheer for you?" Stavros?" Monique said, a cruel grin playing on her face. "I think we should go back to that first lesson. Goodbye."

"I don't want to say goodbye," Stavros shrugged, not letting go of her arm. He leaned in and stole a quick kiss from her parted lip.

Monique thought for a moment, before acting quickly. She pulled back

her fist and aimed it squarely on Stavros' eye. He immediately released her arm and swore profusely,

"What in the hell do you think you're doing?" Stavros demanded, holding his eye. When he finally opened his eyes, she was long gone. Perhaps he should have been coyer, the girl probably thought he only wanted sex, which was partially true. And he wouldn't mind having her around to drive his mother crazy, and provide him with other amusement.

But she was angry, and there were certainly other ways he could get in her good graces.

*** Hotel De Crillon***

##@# "And every time I've held a rose

It seems I only felt the thorns

And so it goes, and so it goes

And so will you soon I suppose"##@#

Stavros danced around the hotel suite happily; just a few hours ago, his mother had boarded an airplane to bother or rather visit Mikkos. He was placed in charge of Stefan and Alexis and basically was free to do as he pleased. And the one thing he truly wanted to do was get Monique to see him as a kind, attractive soul, which he was certainly not.

Stefan walked into the suite and stared at his brother for a moment. He had been acting quite strangely in the past month.

"Brother dear!" Stavros smiled. "How goes it in the land of the melancholy?"

"I wouldn't know," Stefan answered, his brother's infectious spirit invading him. "How are things in the land of the inherently evil?"

"I wouldn't know that either, and you can't ask mother because she's left to annoy the living end out of father," Stavros grinned. "We have free reign of Paris for a few months at least!"

Stefan smiled, relieved at the news. He had been looking forward to getting away from his mother. She had kept a tight reign on him ever since she found out about his fling with the red headed American.

"Would you like to go to America during her absence?" Stavros asked with a knowing smile. "Perhaps Florida?"

Stefan shook his head no rigorously. His sources told him that Bobbie was no longer in Florida. She had moved to a small town in upstate New York where she was undoubtedly safe. And he had just received a picture the other day of his three-year-old daughterâ€¦Caroline. They were safe, and if he dared to come into contact with them, Helena would most certainly suspect something.

Stavros noticed his brother's hesitation. He himself had given the

melancholy man of twenty the money to hire private investigators. Stefan may have only been twenty, but he certainly seemed much older, the pain of lost love making him wise beyond his years.

"Do you still love her?" Stavros asked suddenly, breaking the silence between the two brothers.

"Yes," Stefan answered resolutely. "She will always be in the back of my heart."

"How did you do it? Resign yourself to loving a common woman?" Stavros asked tactfully.

"I never thought about the fact that Barbara was a prostitute Stavros," Stefan explained. "I only loved her."

Stavros digested this before asking his brother with a grin, "Would you like to hear what I've been up to?"

Stefan looked at his older brother warily. Stavros was very carefree, and often got into trouble around the world.

"I haven't done anything to public officials Stefan for God's sake," Stavros laughed, understanding his brother's trepidation. "I'm in love—or I think that I believe I'm in love."

Stefan looked at his brother as if he had gone mad.

"Well say something!" Stavros laughed.

"Are you sure?" Stefan said quietly. "You don't seem to be the love type."

"That's fair," Stavros nodded. "But I am so infatuated with this girl—and she's a poor commoner of Paris at that. I'm quite sure that she has no family to account for her, I've checked her files—she was the maid that found mother."

"You can't be serious!" Stefan's jaw dropped in shock. "I think it would have been better if you had done something horrible to a public official. Mother will never approve of such a relationship—and she'll make sure that father does not either."

"Not so fast Stefan," Stavros grinned, getting up and retrieving a document from his room. He handed it to Stefan ceremoniously and allowed him to read a bit. "It's a legal document father drew up before he left for the Ice Princess. I have his permission to marry whomever I choose. Mother be damned."

"You're very lucky then," Stefan said quietly, handing back the document. "I only wish I could be so fortunate."

Stavros bit his lip. He liked to rib his brother, and at times torture his brother, but he always hated to see him so melancholy. Stavros was a mean, spiteful boy, but he wasn't completely inhuman when it came to his brother.

"Would you like to meet her?" Stavros asked with a grin. "Of course you can't tell her who you are, but you can see her."

"Why can't I let her know who I am?" Stefan asked. A smile grew on his face as he asked, "What have you done?"

"It wasn't my fault, but because of her reaction to my presence she lost her job," Stavros explained reluctantly. "But I've found her another, although she doesn't know about that quite yet."

"What on earth do you have a maid doing?" Stefan asked warily.

"She shall be Alexis' governess for a little while!" Stavros announced joyously. "It's the perfect ruse, she shall fall in love with the little guttersnipe!"

"Do not call Alexis a guttersnipe," Stefan scolded lightly.

"It's a term of endearment, I have nothing against the little girl," Stavros shrugged. "And Alexis will tell her how wonderful her cousin is, and how kind and wonderful!"

"And then she will meet me?" Stefan asked with a smile.

"She shall meet me, and she'll fall at my feet, and we shall be married and mother will have to accept it," Stavros finished triumphantly.

Stefan shook his head; Stavros was quite accustomed to getting his way. He only hoped that this planned romance would work out that well.

Hotel De Crillon, Alexis' room

A twelve-year-old Alexis skipped out onto the terrace, handing her new governess her sketchpad.

"These are lovely Alexis," Monique smiled at the girl.

Alexis beamed back up at her.

"You know I really am happy that my cousin found you for me," Alexis grinned. "I don't get much company traveling with the family, except for Stefan, but he's always so moody. You're the perfect person."

"You're cousin found me?" Monique questioned. "I thought your caretaker interviewed me."

"Of course, but it was my cousin who found you." Alexis explained. "He certainly spoke highly of you, I'm surprised you don't remember him."

"What is your cousin's name?"

"Stavros Cassadine," Alexis shrugged. She looked back up at Monique innocently and asked, "Can we practice my French again?"

But the look on Monique's face told the world that she was in no mood to practice French that was suitable for children. Monique calmly placed the sketchbook down and smiled at Alexis.

"And where would your darling cousin Stavros be right now?" Monique

smiled.

"He's down in the spa, like everyday at this time," Alexis grinned.

"I'll be right back," Monique breathed, restraining herself from storming out of the room.

Her anger didn't abate by the time the elevator reached the spa floor. She spotted that the front desk of the spa was unattended and grabbed the reservation sheet. Stavros Cassadine, private sauna

She stormed off, thinking off all the horrible things she could possibly do to that man. Throwing open the door to the sauna and looking around the steamy room angrily.

Stavros jumped off of his comfortable seat, squinting through the foggy steam. What he saw made his heart race, and probably would have made him sweat if he hadn't already been doing so. Monique was finally in front of him, eyes blazing, black hair precariously wrapped around a pencil at the top of her head.

"I was wondering how long it would take for you to come flying to me," Stavros smiled, pushing the wavy black hair off of his forehead. He knowingly gauged Monique's stance and said, "I would hate for you to hit me again though. I had an awful time making up an excuse for that bruise you inflicted upon me last time."

"Who in the hell do you think you are?" Monique hissed, slamming the door shut and approaching Stavros through the steamy room.

"I'm Stavros Cassadine, heir to the Cassadine Empire," Stavros answered arrogantly.

"And I am Monique Thernadas, a poor orphan who is desperately trying to make it on my own," Monique growled, standing in front of Stavros and pushing on his chest slightly. "I was fine until you decided to grace me with your heir-like presence!"

"I suppose you are angry about the situation I created for you," Stavros admitted. "It had to be done, you needed a job and I needed you to be around me."

"You don't even know me!" Monique shouted angrily.

"I know you, or all that can be known about you from words on a paper," Stavros admitted. "But I would like to know you more, and that was why it was so important to keep you near."

"Haven't you ever been told no?" Monique demanded, pushing against Stavros' chest once more. "I don't want you around me, I don't want you to get to know me, and I don't want your charity."

With each "I don't want" Monique pushed harder against Stavros' chest, nearly pushing him against the wall. On the final "I don't want", Stavros grabbed her hand and pulled her roughly to him, kissing her squarely on the mouth. There wasn't much opportunity for passion or fireworks because Monique insisted on squirming, ruining

the potential mood.

Monique stepped back from Stavros, fire shooting out of her eyes. Stavros knew what was coming next, and he supposed he deserved it, but he couldn't help but want to own that gorgeous pout on her lips. Her hand met the side of his face, leaving an imprint in its wake.

He smirked slightly, rubbing the side of his cheek. But she didn't move away from him, and in the foggy, steamy room he could feel her body inches away from his own. Without a second thought to the consequences or future hand marks on his cheeks he grabbed her by the waist, pulling her to him.

He kissed her passionately this time, pulling her so close that she couldn't squirm. And to his delight and her horror, she responded, kissing him back. He was entirely too close to her and she could feel her own body melting against the rock hard, bare chest of Stavros Cassadine. This was wrong, she was supposed to be terribly mad at him.

He finally loosened his grip, letting her body slid to the floor. She opened her eyes after a second, her fingertips touching where his mouth had just been. She squinted at him, unsure of her own being.

> <p>

"I'm sorry," Stavros breathed, not meaning to push her into passion, but enjoying the result still the same.

Monique said nothing, but she walked out of the room, her face flushed from more than the steam.

"Will you stay?" Stavros opened the door and called after her. "The little guttersnipe really does like having you around!"

Monique only nodded faintly, before heading back to the elevator, back to Alexis' room. Stavros observed her with a self-satisfied grin; it would only be a matter of time before she was in the palm of his hand. Then a realization dawned on him; he was already in the palm of her'sâ€|

Alexis' room

#@#@#" But if my silence made you leave

Then that would be my worst mistake

So I will share this room with you

And you can have this heart to break"#@#@#

"I hate French!" Alexis groaned. "Why must there be so many different ways to say a verb?"

"Mademoiselle, French is a beautiful language," Monique scolded with a smile. "Why would you insult me so?"

"I'm not insulting you, I'm insulting the silly people that decided to use five different words for the!" Alexis laughed. "I like you

very much Monique."

"Well I like you very much too Alexis," Monique grinned. "What would you like to do for dinner tonight?"

"Tonight?" Alexis bit her lip. "I have plans tonightâ€|with uhm, Stefan."

"Oh," Monique nodded. "That's fine, I can have the night off then I supposeâ€|"

"Yes I suppose," Alexis shrugged, she saw Stavros peak his head in the door, to which Monique's back was turned.

Stavros made desperate hand motions, goading Alexis on. He had been nice to the little guttersnipe for a whole week, and he intended to collect on his actions. Alexis rolled her eyes, then gave Monique sincere smile.

"Monique, so you like my cousins?" Alexis asked in a nonchalant manner.

"Stefan is a very nice boy, every inch of a gentleman," Monique answered.

"What about my other cousin?"

"You have another cousin?" Monique asked jokingly.

"You know I do," Alexis giggled. "Stavros is a nice man."

"Did he put you up to this?" Monique asked suspiciously, wondering where this little endorsement was coming from.

"NO!" Alexis insisted. She sighed and said truthfully, "Before you came Stavros was a mean boy, even though he's older than Stefan. He would call me names and ignore me and smile when he saw other people in trouble or something."

> Stavros groaned inwardly, Alexis was turning on him. This wasn't going to impress Monique much.<p>

"But now he's nice to me," Alexis shrugged. "He walks around with a smile, and not a malicious deviant one. He's truly happy."

"Why is he miraculously happy now?" Monique questioned warily.

"Cause he's madly in love with you!" Alexis cried dramatically. She held her hand over her heart and struck a whimsical pose on her bed. "You have changed the beast into a beautyâ€|"

"I doubt that!" Monique giggled. "Stavros is still the mean boy that you remember, he's just hiding it to try and impress me."

Alexis glanced to the door and saw how Stavros face had fallen. She really did like Monique, and she loved the effect she had on her cousin.

> "Don't you like him just a little bit?" Alexis asked quietly. "Do you like the way he looks at all?"<p>

"Your cousin is a very handsome man," Monique answered truthfully. "AND he's entirely aware of that and uses it in the wrong way."

"What do you like most about him?" Alexis asked gleefully, happy to have completed her task.

"About his looks?" Monique asked. "I like his eyes the most."

"Eyes are windows to the soul," Alexis sighed.

"Well if that were true it would make me a very sadistic person Lexie," Monique laughed. "Stavros' soul is nothing short of repulsive I would think. Eyes are windows to a soul's potential."

"Then what is Stavros' soul's potential?"

"He has the ability to be very passionate," Monique sighed, remembering his eyes after that last kiss. "I believe that he could love something with his whole heart, if he ever stopped loving and worshipping himself. He couldn't be very kind ever, but I believe he might be able to be sympatheticâ€|"

"Are you sure you don't like him a little bit?" Alexis sighed; thinking only one truly in love with Stavros could see that in him.

"Guttersnipe!" Stavros called out from down the hall, hoping to interrupt this little conversation before Monique could figure out what was going on.

Alexis jumped from her bed and opened her door. Monique immediately tensed and began to walk around with a flushed face.

"Hello little girl," Stavros looked down at Alexis' beaming face. "I believe that Stefan is waiting to take you out right nowâ€|"

"Bye Monique!" Alexis called out, grabbing her sandals and running out of the room.

Monique reciprocated the goodbye and avoiding Stavros' gaze she began to get her things together.

"And what does the French tutor have planned for this evening?" Stavros asked quietly, letting her close presence sink into his soul.

"Probably nothing as exciting as you," Monique shrugged, trying to step by him.

Stavros stood in front of her, holding a tentative hand out to touch her flushed cheek.

"You're blushing," Stavros announced.

"It's very warm in here," Monique whispered.

"I was wondering, if you would be my guest for dinner this evening," Stavros asked, surprised at the politeness and civility coming out of his own mouth.

"I can not," Monique stammered lamely.

"Please," Stavros asked gently, finally catching her wandering eyes with his own. "I would be very honored if you would."

Monique bit her lip. She should say no, she knew that being around him, letting him charm her was a very bad idea. Her head was screaming no, and her heart was beating a thousand miles a minute as he gazed into her eyes. And she nearly wanted to implode in on herself as she nodded a small yes.

Stavros took her books from her arms and placed them on a nearby table. Without her really being conscious to herself, he linked her arm in his and walked out of the room.

While in the elevator, Monique turned and asked quietly,

"Where exactly are we going?"

"To the top of the world," Stavros grinned. "Or at least as far as I can manage."

He pressed the up button on the elevator, Monique watched and the moment his finger touched that button, an alarm suddenly went off in her head.

"I think we need rules," Monique blurted.

"Rules for dinner?" Stavros smirked.

> "Rules about being around each other," Monique explained. "I do not enjoy slapping or hitting you"
> "You could have fooled me," Stavros laughed.<p>

"And I think if you would like to not be hit tonight," Monique continued seriously. "It would be best if you did not kiss me."

"Well that puts somewhat of a wrench into my plans," Stavros said dryly. "But if that's what you wish I will restrain myself."

"That is what I most definitely wish," Monique nodded emphatically.

"Then I will restrain myself," Stavros said reluctantly before smirking, "For now."

The elevator finally stopped, and Monique was surprised to see that it had gone beyond the penthouse floor. The doors slid open and Stavros led her into a small closet type affair. He bent in the darkness and picked something up.

Monique was slapped with the intense smell of flowers as he handed her a bouquet of what smelled like freesia and cala lilies.

"For the lady," Stavros whispered, opening a door and letting the sunset light stream into the little room.

They stepped out onto the roof of the hotel, where a table was set up with some candles, more flowers and what looked like a sumptuous meal. Monique took in the fabulous view, they were up so high it seemed like they were in the sunset.

A thought occurred to her and she turned to Stavros with a smile, "What would you have done with all this if I didn't agree to come with you?"

"I knew that you would," Stavros shrugged nonchalantly. "But honestly, I did work rather hard to create this sunset and would be terribly disappointed if I couldn't share it with youâ€|"

"You are horribly arrogant," Monique laughed in spite of herself.

Stavros held her chair out for her, and Monique sat down. She was grinning like a Cheshire cat, overwhelmed by this situation. They shared a quiet dinner, enjoying the fading sun and warm summer breeze. Halfway during the dinner Monique gathered the courage to ask a question.

"Is it true what they say about your family?"

"What who says about my family?" Stavros asked in return, dreading the answers he would have to give.

"Does your mother really kill people?" Monique whispered. "People that get in her way?"

Stavros shifted in his seat; he couldn't lie to this girl. He never wanted to lie to her.

"Yes, my mother is quite insane at times," Stavros blurted. "She must get her way at all times. She's a horrible person when you think about it, but she is my motherâ€|"

"Where is your father?" Monique questioned.

> "As far away from my mother at all times, having affairs," Stavros laughed. "Right now he is probably trying to convince Helena to come back to Paris and leave him the hell alone."<p>

"I'm sorry, I was just curious," Monique mumbled, seeing how uncomfortable he was.

"NO, it's fine," Stavros said quickly, reaching across and holding her hand gently. "What else do you wish to know?"

"What makes you the way you areâ€|" Monique whispered, losing herself in his eyes again.

"How do you see me?" Stavros asked with a smile.

"I see you as a troubled boy sometimes," Monique admitted with a

laugh. "Then I see you as a pompous, bothersome man."

"I'm glad you don't water down your truths," Stavros joked, holding a hand over his heart mockingly.

"And then you surprise me, and not even by saying words," Monique tried to explain. "You're so persistent in your pursuit of me, even when you and I both know you could have princessesâ€|"

"I've had princesses," Stavros said truthfully. "And they are nothing compared to you."

They were silent for a few seconds, before Stavros noticed he was still holding her hand across the table. He cleared his throat and said with a smile,

"This is the first time in my life I have ever acted upon another person's whim."

"What do you mean by whim?" Monique asked quietly. She smiled and asked, "Not kissing me or answering my questions?"

"Both," Stavros answered. Then he said truthfully, "It is rather difficult not to kiss you thoughâ€|"

"I'm quite impressed that you can restrain yourself," Monique said drolly.

"I may not be able to much longer," Stavros said truthfully, his thumb gently caressing the inside of her hand.

Monique shivered slightly at the sudden movement. In all her twenty-three years, she never knew hands could suddenly be an erogenous zone.

"I don't know if I want you to restrain yourself any longer," Monique whispered.

That was all the indication Stavros needed, before getting up from his seat and approaching a trembling Monique. He knelt next to her seat, looking up at her face. He knew she was beautiful, but the fading light from the sun and the nervous hopeful look in her eyes would always be permanently ingrained into his heart. This was the one thing in his life he had been waiting for. He touched the side of her cheek gently, nearly electrified by her skin.

And then her lips were on his, he was not kissing her this time, but it was she who was kissing him. Gently and tentatively, her lips touched his making Stavros' heart leap. He deepened the kiss, opening her mouth gently with his tongue. They lost each other in that kiss and he knew that this was the one thing in life that she had been waiting for too.

Hotel De Crillon, three weeks later

##@##" And this is why my eyes are closed

It's just as well for all I've seen

And so it goes, and so it goes

And you're the only one who knows"##@#

Stavros hummed, walking about the hotel suite. His life was beyond perfect. He and Monique had spent every waking moment together since that night on the roof. Along with Stefan and Alexis, they had learned to truly enjoy France, traveling the countryside, visiting the beaches. He had never really been so happy in his life.

And then Helena came back to her children. She walked into that hotel suite and suddenly, Stavros' world shattered. She walked up to him and slapped him, knocking every happy thought from his head.

"You little bastard," Helena hissed.

"I suppose you know about Monique," Stavros said quietly, holding his cheek.

"How dare you insult this family by gallivanting with a peasant!" Helena demanded angrily. "You have made a fool of yourself."

"Mother I love her," Stavros said simply. "More than my own life."

"Do you love her more than her life?" Helena asked with a sneer.

> "Do not try your tricks at this mother," Stavros warned. "I have father's permission to do as I please."<p>

"You are your father!" Helena suddenly shouted, throwing a vase of blood red roses on the ground. "That is why I love you so, more than your brother, and that is also why you will be the death of me!"

"If you make me choose between my love and some ignorant loyalty to the upstanding Cassadine name," Stavros said coldly, "then I will be the death of you."

"I am sending you back to Greece," Helena announced. "You shall accompany Stefan."

"I am a grown man!" Stavros shouted. "You can no longer send me anywhere!"

With that Stavros left the room, desperate to find Monique before Helena did.

He finally found her at the small apartment she lived in.

"Stavros!" Monique smiled, running to his arms and kissing him happily. "What are you doing here so early?"

"My mother has returned," Stavros whispered.

"What does that mean?" Monique asked quietly, sensing his worry and unhappiness.

"She'll try to ruin us, tear us apart," Stavros announced with a bitter laugh.

"She can't," Monique stated, as if it were fact. "She's crazier than I thought if she even triesâ€|"

"She will," Stavros predicted. He turned to her and said, "I love you, more than my own life."

Monique was taken aback by his sudden confession. It was the first time he had ever told her that. Tears came to her brown eyes, and Stavros stopped them before they fell.

"Please tell me what I want to hear," Stavros whispered.

"I love you," Monique said, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Then marry me," Stavros suggested. "Tonight."

Monique thought a moment, although she knew that she would have walked on hot coals if he would ask her to. She nodded and grabbed her apartment key with an absent mind. She turned to him and said numbly,

"Let's go get married then."

Stavros laughed, always amused by her practical nature. They went to a small church in the slums of Paris, waking the priest and begging for an instant ceremony. The priest assented, waking his housekeeper so they would have one witness.

And that night they were married. The ceremony was simple, and in French. Stavros had never felt so content in his life. And he had never been so frightened. The stakes were higher than ever now, and he had to keep Monique safe.

While the housekeeper lit a few candles around the shabby church, she explained that she was a romantic at heart. Helena lit her own candle, paying an arsonist to burn down Monique's apartment.

Stavros and Monique walked quietly down the streets of Paris, as if being married were the most natural thing in the world for them. They held hands and Stavros said nonchalantly,

> "We must get rings as soon as possible."<p>

"Rings are only symbols," Monique laughed. "We don't need something that tells us we belong with one another."

Stavros kissed her forehead gently, while she froze in place.

> "What is it?" Stavros asked.<p>

Monique pointed to the blaze that was far off in the distance. Stavros saw the fire, and knew where it came from. He clutched Monique a little tighter to him, knowing that his mother was deadly serious.

A Provincial Town in France, December 1979

#@#@" So I would choose to be with you

That's if the choice were mine to make

But you can make decisions too

And you can have this heart to break"###@#

Stavros walked into the little house with a smile.

"Monique!" Stavros called out.

"I'm in the bathroom!" Monique called back.

Stavros walked in with a grin; Monique's back turned to him.

"I just got a letter from Stefan," Stavros announced. "Mother suspects nothing."

Stavros had gone back to Greece with his brother and Alexis, after hiding Monique away in this little town. He had stayed in Greece long enough to please his mother, before sneaking away back to Monique. He had been there ever since, and they were both extremely happy, feeling safer every day.

"That's wonderful," Monique answered, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Monique?" Stavros questioned, turning her to face him. Her face was tear-streaked and flushed. He pushed a lock of her black hair from her face and asked, "Tell me what's wrong?"

"I'm pregnant," Monique laughed. "Two months pregnant!"

Stavros stood back, as if the wind was knocked out of him. His head swam with a million different emotions, worry, fear, and unbelievable happiness.

"You're sure?" he breathed, finding his voice was considerably hard to find.

Monique only nodded faintly, although her body was trembling. She was sure he would be unhappy, they were just getting used to living with each other, and living with the fear of his mother. Now they had created a life—one that they couldn't protect.

Stavros sensed her troubles and enveloped her in his arms.

"You have made me so happy," Stavros reassured her.

"But your mother?"

"You have made my life complete," Stavros insisted letting her go and placing her hand over his heart. "You've given me all that I don't deserve, you've completed my life."

Monique nodded, smiling slightly. She knew that he was hiding the sudden fear he felt. She knew that as happy as a child would make them, it would also make each of them worried beyond belief.

Stavros paced nervously, "I must tell somebody."

"Shouldn't you pass around cigars?" Monique joked.

> "I'll call Stefan!" Stavros announced. He kissed his wife goodbye, and headed to the pay phone in town, desperate to share this news with someone.<p>

The hidden phone in Greece was answered in half a ring, Stefan whispered, "Stavros?"

"I have wonderful news!" Stavros grinned. "I am going to be a father!"

"Helena knows where you are," Stefan whispered. "She called from Parisâ€|she knows exactly where you are."

Stavros dropped the phone, Monique was alone. He ran the three miles back to his house, his heart exploding with an intense fear. He would kill his mother; he would kill herâ€|

He opened the door with a slam, calling her name out desperately. He found her lying on the bed, her wrists slit open, lying in a pool of her own bloodâ€|

A hospital

Stavros looked like a scared, starved animal sitting in the waiting room. People observed his hysterical state, his messed hair and his wild dark eyes. Monique was getting a blood transfusion; her body had shut down. He had stammered something to the doctor about a babyâ€|and the doctor cursed in French.

An unborn baby that was defenselessâ€|

He heard his name being called over the intercom, barely. A nurse approached him and asked quietly,

"Are you Stavros Cassadine?"

Stavros barely nodded.

"You have a call."

> Stavros numbly followed her, barely cognizant of reality. He took the extended phone and took a breath.<p>

"It's time you come back home," Helena's voice came over the phone. "Your father requires your help in America."

"I hate you," Stavros whispered.

"Really, I took care of your problem. Let the girl there and she will live," Helena laughed. "Come home to me and I'll spare her life. Stay with her and I'll finish the job I started."

"I hate you, you vile beast," Stavros spat out, slamming the phone down.

The walls were closing in on him, he looked around. He knew only one thought. He must be near Monique now. He stormed past the orderly's and nurse's in the hallway, making his way to her room. The doctor looked up as Stavros barged into the room.

"You shouldn't be here just yet," the doctor said calmly. "She isn't ready for visitors."

"I must be with her," Stavros demanded, tears falling down his face.

"Just let her sleep," the doctor ordered. "The baby is fine for now, but she needs to rest in order to keep things that way."

> Stavros nodded, kneeling by her bed. He looked up at her face; this was the one thing in his life he had been waiting for—true love, happiness, and a real family. And he had it at his fingertips, but he could not keep it. He could not keep her. He picked up the phone, dialing a number he had memorized a long time ago.<p>

"Scorpio," a voice crackled on the other end.

"It's Stavros Cassadine," Stavros managed to get through dry lips.

"What do you want Cassadine?" Robert Scorpio said on the other end. He told him with annoyance, "We don't need you anymore—"

"I want to help you, but I need help myself," Stavros whispered. "I'll help you with anything, I'll help you get the Cassadine Empire on a silver platter, but you must help me please."

Robert cleared his throat on the other end. There was truth and desperation in Stavros' voice. He had offered Stavros a deal long ago, help with taking down the Cassadine family in return for a new life. Of course then Stavros had arrogantly refused, but now everything had changed. And Robert actually did need his help on this one; any clue to this Ice Princess case would help him immensely.

"I know, where my father is, I know his plans," Stavros blurted. "I'll tell you but you have to help me."

"What do you need?" Robert asked quietly, ready to deal.

"A new life for my wife," Stavros answered, looking down at her angelic face.

One week later

Stavros kissed her goodbye and sent her to the boat docks and told her to meet a woman named Anna. He kissed his entire life away, and prepared himself to return to his mother. He knew he was doing the right thing. He would undermine his mother somehow; in the future—he would kill her if he had too. But until then Monique and their child would be safer with out him.

They were taking Monique to America. They would give her a new name, and move her to Florida, at Stavros' request. He wanted there to be a small chance that his brother's child would meet his own. There was

small comfort in that; some variable of his family would stay together.

And he had sold out his father and what he knew of the Ice Princess. But she would be safe, and that was all that mattered. Any sacrifice would be worth her life.

He walked into the Hotel De Crillon, unshaven and unshowered. He had lived the past week in a state of worry, easing Monique's mind, making sure she was in good health, and planning for her future.

Helena watched as her son came in through the door, she saw his heartbreak but ignored it. She was positive she was doing the right thing. If she could not have Mikkos' full love and she did not want Stefan's, Stavros was all she had left. And she would never let him go.

"I have an interesting movie for you to watch," Helena announced. "I was very upset to find that you were making plans, without my approval."

"What have you done now?" Stavros asked numbly, sitting on the couch.

"Made everything right," Helena smiled viciously. She turned off the lights to the room and turned on the primitive VCR.

It was fuzzy and rainy, but he could see the boat in the docks. It was the boat he had sent Monique on. His heart stopped beating and he drew a deep breath.

"I told you a long time ago to listen to me," Helena whispered. "Or there would be consequences."

"What have you done?" Stavros asked.

"This was taped hours ago, when your love boarded," Helena laughed, sending sickening chills down Stavros' back. "I arranged a going away party for your whore and her bastard child."

The boat exploded one fiery ball in the stormy seas. Board and planks went in all different directions and in essence Stavros' life, his every hope and dream died. His mother surveyed him closely, watching his every move. Something in Stavros' mind clicked into place, his heart grew cold and died.

"You have killed me," Stavros whispered, his eyes haunting blank orbs. He let out a sharp, insane laugh, evoking worry and emotion from Helena's own cold heart.

"Do not say that my son," Helena soothed. "You still live but now you have your freedom from her."

"You have killed me," Stavros repeated, shouting it at the top of his lungs. He walked about the room, throwing lamps, punching holes in the wall and breaking the large window that overlooked the city of lights. He shouted at the top of his lungs, "You have killed me!"

And with that he fell into a sobbing heap, everything was gone. Everything worth fighting for was gone, his life was gone. There was nothing left to do but accept his destiny and go insaneâ€|

Meanwhile, near the boat wreckage

> Anna looked at Monique with wary eyes. She had just received the shock of her life.<p>

"It had to look like you were going on that boat," Anna whispered. "We had to let Helena think you were deadâ€|"

"Then Stavros thinks I am dead as well?" Monique asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

"For now, yes," Anna nodded.

"He will go insane," Monique choked out, tears streaming down her face. She turned to Anna with desperation, "I know him, he will destroy himself nowâ€|you must let him know that I'm alive."

"We will in time," Anna said soothingly. "We should go now."

"Call someone, make sure he knows," Monique begged. "He'll destroy himselfâ€|"

"We will," Anna promised. She looked at Monique, desperate to get the haunted look out of her eyes. She smiled as they walked to a different boat; "Robert tells me that you are going to have a child."

Monique nodded, her hand flying to her still flat stomach protectively.

"What are you going to name it?" Anna asked. "Do you want it to be a girl or a boy?"

"A girl, it will be a girl," Monique said assertively. "A girl could escape that horrible Cassadine curseâ€|"

"What will you name her?"

"Kate," Monique answered. "Stavros bought a book of names at the hospital. He liked that one. He said Kate, but we will call her Katyaâ€|"

##@##"And so it goes, and so it goes

And you're the only one who knows"##@##@

End
file.